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CIA aides plan suit to win back jobs

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WASHINGTON—The "Halloween Massacre" of about 200 Central Intelligence Agency employees who were sacked without warning Oct. 31 echoed in Washington Thursday as some of them fought to reverse the verdict.

A dozen victims of the purge planned to file a class-action suit against Adm. Stansfield Turner, CIA director, to win reinstatement on the ground their dismissals were discriminatory. Others were buttonholing their congressmen.

Intelligence sources doubted this would help those who got sacked because, it was said, the CIA director's authority to hire and fire is clearly stated. Unlike other government agencies, the CIA is an "excepted service" and not governed by Civil Service Commission rules.

First cutback

The wholesale firing was the first of a series of planned cutbacks to reduce the number of people in the controversial Covert Operations branch of the CIA by 820 within a 26-month period.

Career CIA professionals who make no secret of their dislike for Turner said the dismissals had to come but deplored the execution.

"After handing out the pink notices," one CIA man said sardonically, "the admiral had a big Halloween party that night. I'm sure it was only a coincidence, but the results were on the macabre side."

"There are two things to keep in

mind about Turner," said another CIA officer. "One is that personally he's an SOB. Secondly, he is systems-oriented and doesn't give a damn about people."

Turner's supporters hotly deny both charges.

"It's a no-win situation for us," said Herbert Hetu, a retired Navy captain who serves as Turner's public affairs officer.

Hetu pointed out that the reductions would have taken place regardless of whether Turner was CIA director. The end of the war in Southeast Asia left the CIA with about 800 surplus Covert Operations people.

No one knew who would go

Hetu also disputed the statement that the dismissals came without warning. Actually, he said, Turner personally addressed CIA employees at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., Aug. 8-9, explaining that the dismissals were coming and why and giving dates.

But no one knew who was going to get the ax since the dismissals were based on competitive rankings.

The current cutback is scheduled for completion by March, 1978.

"Meanwhile," reported one CIA man from Langley, "the floors out here are covered with blood. It's a trauma for those who got fired and those who had to tell them they were. My God, I've been through all sorts of hell with some of these people and now I have to tell them they're out because they aren't good enough."